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ABSTRACT

In the first of these papers, the author discusses how and why he and his colleagues established a set of professional standards for trainers or group leaders in the human relations program for undergraduates at Pennsylvania State, as well as a procedure for enforcing trainer qualifications and performance. The need for standards is viewed in terms of both public and professional concerns for the psychological safety of participating students. The following are elaborated: (1) minimal entry level criteria; (2) additional full trainer status criteria; (3) criteria for measuring a trainer's interpersonal skills; and (4) criteria for maintaining full trainer status. The second paper considers the haphazard and inconsistent way in which drug and sex education policies are formulated and implemented. Essential elements of effective policy development are summarized: (1) goals of the institution; (2) the channeling of resources; (3) the framework for decision making; (4) a guide to action; and (5) collection of data. Such a policy would, in the author's opinion, facilitate the institutional commitment to drug and sex education. (TL)

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S P A T E #3 POLICY DEVELOPMENT IN STUDENT PERSONNEL: ADMISSIONS, DRUGS, SEX, ETC. (Fourth Paper)

Policy Development in Sex and Drug Education.

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Introduction

Historically, American higher education has assumed responsibility for the personal and moral development of its students. Until recently, the way in which a college carried out this obligation was through a rather rigid set of rules and regulations which prohibited certain behaviors and prescribed others. For many reasons, these prohibitions and prescriptions have been liberalized or eliminated in most colleges. But problems of personal development remain, and higher education must seek new and creative ways of educating students for personal development.

In his paper entitled "The Nature of Policy and its Role in Student Personnel," Dr. Frank Lutz points out that much of what passes for educational policy is not really policy at all, but prohibitions to certain kinds of action and prescriptions of specific action. No where would one find a better example of policy that really isn't policy than the way in which most of higher education has responded to the sexual development of college students, unless one examined policies relating to drug use and abuse. In any event, these responses have failed or been abondoned because our policies weren't flexible enough to adapt to changing conditions among our students, and in our society.

Dr. Lutz also outlines the dimensions of effective policy: it should reflect the goals of the institution, channel resources, provide a framework for decision making, provide for collection of relevant data, and offer a guide to action. Institutions of higher education need to begin efforts to develop policies relating to sex and drug education which reflect those criteria.

Current Policies or the Lack Thereof

Policies regarding sex and drug education were really not policies at all but programmed decisions based upon tradition and crisis. Sexual development of

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students has been ignored, in the hope, I suppose, that by not talking about it, students would not get curious. To prevent the harmful effects of sexual activity, students were entrapped by a series of rules and regulations designed to monitor their behavior. Recent liberalization or elimination of these rules and regulations has meant that for most campuses, there is no commitment to helping students with their sexual development.

Drugs have been dealt with in an even more haphazzard and inconsistent way. Most universities have concerned themselves with the prevention of illegal drug use. Again, enforcement of university or civil law has been the main effort at determent. But drug use and abuse continues to rise. Universities have not concerned themselves with how drug use, both legal and illegal, harmful and helpful can be integrated into a student's total development.

Sex Education Policy (An Example)

The university is committed to the development and maintenance of the mental and physical health of the student. An important part of the student's health is his sexual development. Specifically, the university is committed to the integration of sexual development into the student's total development, and to the prevention of physically and mentally harmful outcomes of sexual activity such as venereal disease and problem pregnancies.

The total university has an obligation to assist in a program of sex education, including physicians, biologists, psychologists, sociologists, student personnel professionals and other behavior scientists.

The Office of Student Affairs shall coordinate the total university program, establishing liaison with other university departments involved. As coordinator, the Office of Student Affairs shall have final authority in the development of a balanced program, and the avoidance of overlapping or duplicating programs. The program shall be evaluated by an on-going institutional research unit, and shall report its findings to the Office of Student Affairs.

Each cooperating department shall, in cooperation and coordination with other

departments, develop programs within its competence, or combine with other departments, pursuant to the goals described above.

The Office of Student Affairs shall call together the cooperating departments before (date) to beginning planning the program. Each head of the cooperating departments shall name a representative to this coordinating committee who shall have the competence and the time (released time, if necessary) to develop this program. Programs should be ready for piloting by the academic year ____.

The coordinating committee shall seek the best available knowledge in the areas of sexual development of college students, as well as existing programs in sex education at other universities

Discussion

The above statement contains the essential elements of policy development as outlined by Dr. Lutz. It outlines the goals of the institution, the channeling of resources, the framework for decision making, a guide to action, and collection of data. It is flexible enough to allow for several programs, and the input of multiple resources.

There are risks associated with such a policy. Much of America is still very much associated with the moral tenet that sex is not a subject to be talked about and discussed outside the family or church. But the above policy is consistent with the basic purposes of a university, which attempts to seek the truth no matter what the consequences.

A similar policy could easily be developed in regard to drug education, because the issues are comparable in terms of policy and program.

Summary

Universities suffer from the lack of consistent and workable policies, particularly in dealing with drug and sex education. With the development of such policies, programs can be developed to implement the institutional commitment to education in these areas.

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PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS FOR HUMAN RELATIONS TRAINERS

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Introduction

For the past eight years, the Office of Student Activities of Penn State University has been conducting a program for undergraduate students in human relations training. It is a program that has a good deal of visibility both inside and outside the academic community. Recently, human relations training (encounter groups, sensitivity groups) has attracted a good deal of interest, and at times has been treated in the public media in a reather sensational, even notorious way. These reactions range from curiosity and enthusiasm to skepticism and hostility. One of the issues that has provoked the most controversy, both nationally and at Penn State has been the issue of professional standards of trainers or group leaders. Opinions range from those who feel that trainers should be psychotherapists to those who argue that just about anyone can conduct a group. Even among the helping professions there is no unanimity of informed opinion on this issue.

It was against this background of widely divergent opinion that my colleagues and I forged a set of standards which we hoped would make sense in our particular community. We established a set of professional standards, as well as a procedure for enforcing trainer qualifications and performance. This paper tells how and why we did it.

Definition

We restricted our focus to human relations training groups. The proliferation of all kinds of group work in higher education is obvious. Just what kind of groups is much less obvious. There are encounter groups, sensitivity groups, human relations groups, leadership development groups, human potential groups, nude encounter groups, counseling groups, therapy groups, discussion groups, confrontation groups, etc. When we use the term "human relations group," we mean a small (9-12 members) relatively unstructured group whose goals are personal growth, including increased self knowledge and awareness as well as increased interpersonal competence. The group chooses its own directions, with the trainer facilitating the expression of thoughts and feelings. The focus is upon the dynamics of the immediate interper-

sonal interaction as the focus of learning.

According to Carl Rogers, such a group "...with much freedom and little structure, the individual will gradually feel directly on a feeling basis (come to a basic encounter) with other members of the group; will come to understand himself and his relationship to others more accurately; that he will change in his personal attitudes and behavior; that he will subsequently relate more effectively to others in this everyday life situation."[1]

Our discussion, then, is limited to professional standards of group leaders or trainers who conduct human relations training groups.

Role of the Trainer

As I mentioned earlier, there is much difference of opinion regarding the role of the trainer in a human relations training group. Trainer styles range from very non-directive to very directive. Our staff, however, felt that regardless of style, the trainer has two major responsibilities. First, hw should promote the overall goals of the group, by trying to facilitate the personal growth and development of the participants. Second, he must assume part of the responsibility for the psychological safety of the participants. Many persons would dispute this second point, arguing that each participant must assume full responsibility for himself. But we reasoned that not everyone, particularly an undergraduate student, is fully capable of assuming that responsibility, and that the trainer must assist in that task. As a knowledgeable and skill member of the group, the trainer must abe alert to the potential destructive capabilities of a group.

When we assumed part of the responsibility for the psychological safety of our group members, as well as the promotion of positive outcomes, we had to forge professional standards that insured the competency of our staff to prevent harm.

The Need for Standards: A Public As Well As Professional Concern

We faced a very serious dilemma early in the development of our program concerning the difference between those standards that were demanded by the public (particularly the academic community) and those we felt were necessary for the

professional competence of our staff. The early discussions of our staff centered around the interpersonal and intrapersonal competence of the trainer. We talked about the trainer's own personal openness and state of mental health. We discussed his ability to self-disclose, give feedback, analyze group process, and help solve issues and problems. We argued about what interpersonal skills were necessary to help participants grow and learn. We discussed what knowledge of psychopathology and interpersonal dynamics a trainer needed to be effective.

At the same time these discussions were happening, we were also being called upon to defend the credentials of our trainers to the university community. Suddenly academic degrees, professional training, supervision, and the like became the basis for judging the competence of our trainers. Most other helping professions have established these kind of criteria for certification and accreditation, and we soon discovered that we had to pay attention to these criteria. (Even though most of our staff saw little relationship between these criteria and professional competence) But the environment within which we were operating, both inside and outside the academic community demanded these more traditional kinds of credentials. And as our program grew in size and visibility, we could no longer ignore these pressures. Merely being competent was not enough!

The standards we eventually arrived at reflected both the public and professional credentials we have discussed. These standards fell under two main categories, entry criteria and maintenance criteria. We also established two categories of professional status: co-trainer and trainer. Co-trainers are prospective trainers who must work with full trainers, participate in our in-service training program, and generally learn the training profession. They may not conduct a group by themselves. Full trainer status, on the other hand, entitles the professional to conduct a group on his own.

Entry Criteria

What background and experiences should a prospective co-trainer have? After much staff deliberation and discussion, involving many of the same issues now being discussed nationally, we arrive at the following criteria:

Co-Trainers

1. He should hold or be working toward a graduate degree in a behavioral science field. All other helping professions require or recommend graduate training; we required graduate training in order to remain on a par with them. Also, working within the context of higher education, we felt we would enhance our credibility within the academic community.
2. He must have a strong academic background in the theory and application of the behavioral sciences, specifically in interpersonal and group areas. Knowledge about interpersonal and group dynamics is an important element in trainer competence. This knowledge can be drawn from a wide variety of disciplines in the behavioral sciences.
3. He must be committed to, or working toward a commitment to a professional activity related to individual and group work. Training is not an activity that can be worked at sporadically. The potential trainer must be associated with an occupation that involves individual and group work as basic to its purpose.
4. He should have extensive experience as a participant in human relations training groups. Without the full experience of being a participant, a trainer cannot fully comprehend what the participant is experiencing. We recommend at least three such experiences, at least one of which provides an opportunity for our staff to train or observe.

5. He should possess interpersonal skills that would facilitate learning experience in a group. Later in this paper we will outline the types of skills required and a method of evaluating those skills.

Trainers

Before a person is considered for selection as a full trainer (that is, capable of assuming the full responsibility for training a group), he should have met the minimal standards designated for entry, and in addition:

1. He should have at least three experiences as a co-trainer under the supervision of competent staff. There is no substitute for working with an already skillful trainer as a way of learning to conduct a training group. The trainer should be committed to helping the co-trainer develop and refine the skills necessary to conduct a group.
2. He should possess interpersonal competencies that would enable him to assume the possibility for sole leadership of a human relations group.

Interpersonal Skills

Obviously, the most important entry criteria is the interpersonal skill level of the potential trainer. Yet this criterion is also the most difficult to evaluate. Currently, we evaluate our staff according to the following:

1. The Trainer as a Model: He must know how to make appropriate feeling and content responses in terms of the observed needs of the group. He must be able to intervene with brief, well timed, and accurate observations about individual and group behavior. He must be able to give and receive feedback related to specific behaviors. He must make use of "here and now" data. He must be able to perceive his own trainer style and need system and its effect on the group. He must demonstrate ability to use appropriate exercises or other learning experiences as appropriate.
2. The Trainer as Knowledgeable Professional: He must understand the process of individual and small group learning for participants. He must have a working knowledge of theories of personal development and group development.

He must be able to make appropriate interventions of individual or group theory to a group.

3. The Trainer as Group Leader: He must be able to create an atmosphere of openness, and trust among group members. He must be empathic, and be able to deal with strong affective expressions in a group. He must be able to help participants set goals, practice different approaches to meeting goals, and develop deeper insights into their own behavior. He must be able to identify his own feelings and life experiences and expressing them in appropriate ways. He must be able to recognize and deal with individual difficulties and pathologies that may emerge. He must be able to assist the group in developing its own resources to deal with issues (as opposed to trainer solutions.)
4. The Trainer as Designer of Programs: He must be able to identify and operationalized program goals, establish methods for achieving goals, establish criteria for evaluating a program. He must be able to implement a program, using both established learning exercises as well as creating new ones on the spot.
5. The Trainer as Colleague: He must be able to work effectively with other trainers in an interdependent manner. He must deal openly with interpersonal and program issues. He must follow the professional and ethical standards of his profession. He must contribute his own ideas and behavior to his colleagues, as well as learn from them.

Maintenance Criteria

After assuming full trainer status, trainers must complete the following activities in order to maintain their status in our program:

1. He is expected to continue professional growth and development by participating in experiences designed to strengthen his skills and theoretical foundations. Examples of this continuation of learning would include keeping up to date with the literature, being an occasional participant (as opposed to a trainer) in a training group, participating in relevant courses, seminars, and discussion

groups, conducting research, and participating in in-service training programs.

2. He must participate in a professional capacity in at least two training groups per year.
3. He must be willing to have his work observed and evaluated at least once a year.

Mechanisms of Enforcement of Professional Standards

Professional standards, to mean anything, must be enforced. Our program established an Ethics and Standards Committee, which, in addition to establishing ethical standards, also monitors and enforces entry and maintenance criteria. As previously mentioned, all staff members must be observed once a year under the following conditions:

1. Trainer will, to the extent feasible, determine the occasion on which the observation is to occur.
2. Observers will operate in pairs in order to enhance reliability.
3. All trainers will serve as ovservers on a rotational basis.
4. A training program will be conducted by the Ethics and Standards Committee to develop observer skills and to maintain standards of observation.
5. Evaluation data will be communicated to the evaluee constructively with the intent to provide him with usable recommendations for improving his functioning (regardless of competency level) and for meeting minimum standards (where functioning is sub-standard). Sub-standard functioning may require stipulations and sanctions.

Summary and Conclusions

We don't pretend to know all the answers regarding professional standards, but we do have an operational set of standards with mechanisms for enforcement. Any human relations training program must take into account the realities of the local situation while at the same time maintaining standards comparable to other helping professions.